

NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF U. S. NAVY HOSPITAL SHIP HAVEN (AH-12)

The personnel ordered as a commissioning detail for the U.S.S. HAVEN began to arrive at Naval Training Station, Newport, Rhode Island on November 26, 1944, and on December 4th began their ten day period of indoctrination. Meanwhile selected personnel for clerical and equipment procurement were busy upon their diversified tasks at the Medical Supply Depot, Brooklyn, N.Y.

In the first part of January 1945 the Medical Record and Property sections together with the office forces of the five other ships of the Haven class were moved to the second story of N.M.S.D. garage located across the street from the Medical Supply Depot on Pearl and Sands Sts, Brooklyn. The Medical procurement section was busily engaged in gathering the standard Medical Supplies and equipment and many special items considered necessary for the ships mission. By March of 1945 nearly all of the Medical and hospital corps officers assigned had arrived. Ensign Edward B. Evans, (MC), USN was sent to Newport to take charge of the hospital corpsmen, as up to that time they had been under the charge of line officers.

In April the assigned Nurses began to arrive and the hospital corpsmen were ordered to Brooklyn from Newport and given five and ten day leaves.

On May first the Haven and Tranquility staged a commissioning party at a large Armory in Brooklyn. About four thousand persons attended and speeches were made by the senior officers. Plaques were presented as part of the ceremony.

42 May 5, 1945 was the official commissioning date of the Haven and the commissioning ceremony brought many visitors aboard ship to see the ultimate in design and arrangement of the new class of hospital ships. The U.S.S. HAVEN was placed in commission by Captain T. T. PATTERSON, USN (Ret.) Commanding Officer, Lieut. Comdr. E. J. BEDNARZ, Executive Officer and Captain Robert P. PARSONS, (MC) USN, Senior Medical Officer. Photographs were made of the ceremony.

The ship moved from the Todd Erie Basin, Brooklyn, New York on its commissioning day and moored at 35th St. Pier, Brooklyn. The next five days were spent loading medical supplies, equipment, provisions and squaring away the various departments and on 10 May 1945 the Haven arrived at Bayonne New Jersey to prepare for a three day shake down cruise which was finished uneventfully on 13 May 1945. On 16 May 1945 the Haven moved from Brooklyn to Norfolk Virginia to begin a ten day shake down cruise in Chesapeake Bay.

During the 10 day shake down cruise which lasted from 19 May 1945 to 29 May 1945 the Haven was called upon to perform one of the first tasks for which she was built. The S.S. JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN called upon the Haven to furnish Medical assistance to an injured seaman who had been struck by a falling hatch cover. Richard Levitzke, Merchant seaman was brought aboard by litter hoist on 29 May 1945 in an unconscious state and was placed on the serious list with a diagnosis of Intracranial Injury. He was transferred to the hospital the following day when the ship arrived at the Navy Yard Portsmouth, Va. During this foregoing period numerous kinds of drills were held daily and the hospital corps personnel were being educated and trained for their medical duties.

Notable among the drills was the use of 150 pound dummies which were used to simulate stretcher casualties. Large numbers of these were embarked by litter hoists from amphibious boats in the Chesapeake. Personnel were thoroughly indoctrinated in this method of receiving patients and the routine was carried out to the arrival of the patient on the ward.

During the period from 30 May 1945 to 14 June 1945 the Haven was at Portsmouth, Va., Navy Yard undergoing various final installations and changes.

On 16 June 1945 the Haven was underway bound for Colon, Canal Zone. During the trip the U.S.S. NIELACK (DD424) came alongside 18 June 1945 and put over an appendicitis case for surgery. The ship arrived at Colon, Canal Zone on 22 June 1945 and proceeded through the locks on the same day having spent seven hours, 25 minutes in transit.

The Haven departed from Balboa, C.Z. on 23 June 1945 and was underway for Pearl Harbor, T. H., when on 30 June a call was received from the S.S. MOEILGAS that she wished to transfer an appendicitis case to the Haven. The ships proceeded to an arranged rendezvous and the Haven put a MLB over the side and brought back the patient using the litter hoist to bring him aboard., (this incident was printed in the November issue of the Hospital Corps Quarterly.)

The Haven arrived at Pearl Harbor on 6 July 1945. While underway daily drills had been held including litter and patient distribution drills.

43 The Haven was moored to buoys at Pearl Harbor from 6 July 1945 to 23 July 1945 while awaiting assignment. On the later date the Haven shifted berths to Able 12 to load its first contingent of patients. The loading proceeded smoothly and with dispatch as by now her crew had been well indoctrinated with its task.

A total of 691 patients of various classes was embarked, the bulk consisting of neuropsychiatric and tuberculosis cases. The ship's Air-conditioning system was a great comfort to the patients on this trip. The Hammond Organ was used for a concert at the first meal and the patients were greatly impressed. The individual reading lamps and five-channel radio connection for ear-phones also added much to the patients morale.))

The Haven was underway for San Francisco from 25 July 1945 to 31 July 1945 and disembarked patients at Pier No. 7 on the latter date. On 5 August 1945 the ship was underway for a return trip for Pearl Harbor, arriving the 11th of August. The Haven was moored at Pearl Harbor when the war ended 13 August 1945. The following day it was underway bound for Ulithi, Caroline Islands. Orders were received to divert course to Okinawa, Ryuku group on August 19, 1945 and the ship anchored in Buckner Bay, Okinawa on 28 August 1945.

Plans were begun immediately for the Haven to participate in the evacuation of prisoners of War from Nagasaki, Kyushu, Japan.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

Although there was no participation in combat area activities, enough observation was made on the new electric motor litter hoists, both in drills and in other actual patient embarkations at sea to conclude that this device is a distinct improvement over older methods and constitutes an important measure of progress in the difficult procedure of embarkation at sea.

The design of the ship and all new features of medical facilities for treatment, general care, comfort and morale of patients were impressive as advances over those of older and smaller types of hospital ships.

The personnel organization was entirely adequate in all branches, medical corps, dental corps, Nurse corps and hospital corps. It appeared to be adequate even for any eventuality of war. The arrival of much of this personnel far in advance of the ship's commissioning, therefore in advance of and in excess of needs made for an awkward situation. This circumstance was the result of repeated delays in the ship's commissioning beyond the dates anticipated.

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CHRONOLOGY U.S.S. HAVEN

5 May USS HAVEN placed in commission at Todd Erie Basin,
Brooklyn, New York.

5 May Underway for 35th St. Pier, Brooklyn.

5 May Moored at 35th St. Pier, Brooklyn.

10 May Underway for Bayonne, N.J.

10 May Arrived Bayonne, N.J.

11 May Underway from Bayonne, N.J. for Long Island Sound
for three-day shake down cruise. Anchored in Oyster
Bay Harbor each late afternoon.

13 May Moored at 35th St. Pier, Brooklyn.

16 May Underway from 35th St. Pier, Brooklyn.

17 May Moored at Pier No. 7, N.O.B., Norfolk, Va.

19 May Underway for ten-day shake down cruise in
Chesapeake Bay.

29 May Moored at Pier No. 7, N.O.B. Norfolk, Va.

30 May Underway for Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Va.

30 May Arrived Portsmouth, Va. for availability at Norfolk,
Navy Yard.

14 June Underway to N.O.B. Norfolk, Va.

14 June Moored at Pier No. 5, Norfolk, Va.

16 June Underway for Colon, C.Z.

22 June Arrived Colon, C.Z.

22 June Entered Gatun Locks.

22 June Entered Pedro Miguel Locks.

22 June Entered Miraflores Locks.

22 June Moored to Pier No. 18, Balboa, Panama, C.Z.
Total time of transit of Canal, 7 hours, 25 minutes.

23 June Underway from Balboa, C.Z. for Pearl Harbor, T.H.

6 July Moored to buoys, Pearl Harbor, T. H.

23 July Shifted berths to Able 12 to load patients.

25 July Underway for San Francisco, Calif.

31 July Moored to Pier No. 7, San Francisco, Calif.
Disembarked patients.

1 Aug Shifted from Pier No. 7 to anchorage in San
Francisco Bay.

5 Aug Underway for Pearl Harbor, T.H.

11 Aug Moored to buoys, Pearl Harbor, T. H.

13 Aug War ends.

14 Aug Underway for Ulithi, Caroline Islands.

19 Aug Diverted Course to Okinawa Jima, Ryukyu Group via Guam.

25 Aug Passed North of Guam.

28 Aug Anchored in Buckner Bay, Okinawa.